

Office of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

7. *Byrd Anti-Lobbying Amendment (31 U.S.C. 1352)*. Contractors who apply or bid for an award of \$100,000 or more shall file the required certification. Each tier certifies to the tier above that it will not and has not used Federal appropriated funds to pay any person or organization for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with obtaining any Federal contract, grant or any other award covered by 31 U.S.C. 1352. Each tier shall also disclose any lobbying with non-Federal funds that takes place in connection with obtaining any Federal award. Such disclosures are forwarded from tier to tier up to the recipient.

8. *Debarment and Suspension (Executive Orders 12549 and 12689)*. No contract shall be made to parties listed on the General Services Administration's List of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement or Non-procurement Programs in accordance with Executive Orders 12549 and 12689, "Debarment and Suspension." This list contains the names of parties debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded by agencies, and contractors declared ineligible under statutory or regulatory authority other than Executive Order 12549. Contractors with awards that exceed the small purchase threshold shall provide the required certification regarding its exclusion status and that of its principal employees.

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AUTHORITY: Subparts 1261.4, 1261.5, and 1261.6 issued under 42 U.S.C. 2473(c); 31 U.S.C. 3711 *et seq.*; 5 U.S.C. 5514; 4 CFR parts 101–105; 5 CFR part 550 subpart K, §§ 550.1101–550.1107.

SOURCE: 45 FR 48104, July 18, 1980, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart 1261.1—Employees' Personal Property Claims

AUTHORITY: 31 U.S.C. 2371, *et seq.*

§ 1261.100 Scope of subpart.

This subpart prescribes regulations governing the settlement of claims against the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for damage to, or loss of, personal property incident to service with NASA.

§ 1261.101 Claimants.

(a) A claim for damage to, or loss of, personal property incident to service with NASA may be made only by:

(1) An officer or employee of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration;

(2) A member of the uniformed services (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Coast and Geodetic Survey and Public Health Service) assigned to duty with or under the jurisdiction of NASA;

(3) The authorized agent or legal representative of a person named in paragraph (a)(1) or (2) of this section; or

(4) The survivors of a person named in paragraph (a)(1) or (2) of this section in the following order of precedence:

Spouse; children, father or mother, or both; or brothers or sisters, or both. Claims by survivors may be allowed whether arising before, concurrently with, or after the decedent's death, if otherwise covered by this subpart.

(b) Employees of contractors with the United States and employees of nonappropriated fund activities are not included within the meaning of paragraph (a)(1) or (2) of this section.

(c) Claims may not be made by or for the benefit of a subrogee, assignee, conditional vendor, or other third party.

§ 1261.102 Maximum amount.

From October 1, 1982, to October 30, 1988, the maximum amount that may be paid under the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees' Claim Act of 1964, as amended (31 U.S.C. 3721) is \$25,000, and on or after October 31, 1988, the maximum amount is \$40,000 (Pub. L. 100–565, 102 Stat. 2833, October 31, 1988).

[54 FR 35456, Aug. 28, 1989]

§ 1261.103 Time limitations.

(a) A claim may be allowed only if the claim is presented in writing within 2 years after it accrues. For the purposes of this subpart, a claim accrues at the time of the accident or incident causing the loss or damage, or at such time as the loss or damage is or should have been discovered by the claimant through the exercise of due diligence.

(b) If a claim accrues in time of war or if an armed conflict intervenes within 2 years after it accrues, and if good cause is shown, the claim may be presented not later than 2 years after that cause ceases to exist, or 2 years after the war or armed conflict is terminated, whichever is earlier. The dates of beginning and ending of such an armed conflict are the dates established by concurrent resolution of the Congress or by a determination of the President.

§ 1261.104 Allowable claims.

(a) A claim may be allowed only if:

(1) The damage or loss was not caused wholly or partly by the negligent or wrongful act of the claimant,

the claimant's agent, private employee, or family member (the standard to be applied is that of reasonable care under the circumstances);

(2) The possession of the property lost or damaged and the quantity is determined to have been reasonable, useful, or proper under the circumstances; and

(3) The claim is substantiated by proper and convincing evidence.

(b) Claims which are otherwise allowable under this subpart shall not be disallowed solely because the property was not in the possession of the claimant at the time of the damage or loss, or solely because the claimant was not the legal owner of the property for which the claim is made. For example, borrowed property may be the subject of a claim.

(c) Subject to the conditions in paragraph (a) of this section and the other provisions of this subpart, any claim for damage to, or loss of, personal property incident to service with NASA may be considered and allowed. The following are examples of the principal types of claims which may be allowed, but these examples are not exclusive and other types of claims may be allowed, unless excluded by § 1261.105.

(1) *Property loss or damage in quarters or other authorized places.* Claims may be allowed for damage to, or loss of, property arising from fire, flood, hurricane, other natural disaster, theft, or other unusual occurrence, while such property is located at:

(i) Quarters within the 50 States or the District of Columbia that were assigned to the claimant or provided by the United States;

(ii) Quarters outside the 50 States and the District of Columbia that were occupied by the claimant, whether or not they were assigned or provided by the United States, except when the claimant is a civilian employee who is a local inhabitant; or

(iii) Any warehouse, office working area, hospital, or other place authorized or apparently authorized for the reception or storage of property.

(2) *Transportation or travel losses.* Claims may be allowed for damage to, or loss of, property incident to transportation or storage pursuant to orders, or in connection with travel

under orders, including property in the custody of a carrier, an agent or agency of the Government, or the claimant.

(3) *House trailers.* Claims may be allowed for damage to, or loss of, house trailers and their contents under the provisions of paragraph (c)(2) of this section.

(4) *Negligence of the Government.* Claims may be allowed for damage to, or loss of, property caused by the negligence or wrongful act or omission of any employee of the Government while acting within the scope of office or employment.

(5) *Enemy action or public service.* Claims may be allowed for damage to, or loss of, property as a direct consequence of:

(i) Enemy action or threat of action or combat, guerrilla, brigandage, or other belligerent activity, or unjust confiscation by a foreign power or its nationals;

(ii) Action by the claimant to quiet a civil disturbance or to alleviate a public disaster; or

(iii) Efforts by the claimant to save human life or Government property.

(6) *Property used for benefit of the Government.* Claims may be allowed for damage to, or loss of, property when used for the benefit of the Government at the request of, or with the knowledge and consent of, an authorized official.

(7) *Clothing and accessories.* Claims may be allowed for damage to, or loss of, clothing or accessories customarily worn on the person, such as eyeglasses, hearing aids or dentures.

§ 1261.105 Unallowable claims.

Claims are not allowable for the following:

(a) *Unassigned quarters in United States.* Claims may not be allowed for property loss or damage in quarters occupied by the claimant within the 50 States or the District of Columbia that were not assigned to claimant or provided in kind by the United States.

(b) *Money or currency.* Claims may not be allowed for loss of money or currency, except when lost incident to fire, flood, hurricane, other natural disaster, or by theft from quarters (as limited by paragraph (a)). Reimbursement for loss of money or currency is

limited to an amount which is determined reasonable to have been in the claimant's possession at the time of the loss.

(c) *Government property.* Claims may not be allowed for property owned by the United States, except that for which the claimant is financially responsible to any agency of the Government other than NASA.

(d) *Business property.* Claims may not be allowed for property used in a private business enterprise.

(e) *Articles of extraordinary value.* Claims may not be allowed for valuable articles, such as cameras, watches, jewelry, furs; or other articles of extraordinary value, when shipped with household goods or as unaccompanied baggage (shipment includes storage). This prohibition does not apply to articles in the personal custody of the claimant or articles properly checked: *Provided*, That reasonable protection or security measures have been taken by claimant.

(f) *Unserviceable property.* Claims may not be allowed for worn-out unserviceable property.

(g) *Illegal possession.* Claims may not be allowed for property acquired, possessed, or transported in violation of law or in violation of applicable regulations or directives.

(h) *Estimate fees.* Claims may not include fees paid to obtain estimates or repair, except when it is clear that an estimate could not have been obtained without paying a fee.

(i) *Automobiles and other vehicles.* Claims may not be allowed for damage to, or loss of, automobiles and other vehicles unless:

(1) The vehicles were required to be used for official Government business (official Government business, as used here, does not include travel between quarters and place of duty, parking of vehicles incident to such travel, or use of vehicles for the convenience of the owner); or

(2) Shipment of motor vehicles to, from, or between overseas areas was being furnished or provided by the Government; or

(3) The damage or loss was caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of any employee of the Government acting within the scope of office or employment.

§ 1261.106 Submission of claims.

All claims shall be submitted in duplicate to the Administrator or designee on NASA Form 1204, "Employee's Claim for Damage to, or Loss of, Personal Property Incident to Service."

§ 1261.107 Evidence in support of claim.

(a) *General.* In addition to the information required on NASA Form 1204, and any other evidence required by the Administrator or designee, the claimant will furnish the following evidence when relevant:

(1) A corroborating statement from the claimant's supervisor or other person or persons having personal knowledge of the facts concerning the claim.

(2) A statement of any property recovered or replaced in kind.

(3) An itemized bill of repair for property which has been repaired, or one or more written estimates of the cost of repairs from competent persons if the property is repairable but has not been repaired.

(b) *Specific classes of claims.* Claims of the following types shall also be accompanied with specific and detailed evidence as indicated:

(1) *Theft, burglary, etc.* A statement describing in detail the location where the loss occurred and the facts and circumstances surrounding the loss, including supporting documentation, e.g., a police report.

(2) *Transportation losses.* A copy of orders authorizing the travel, transportation or shipment, or a certificate explaining the absence of such orders and stating their substance; all bills of lading and inventories of property shipped; and a statement indicating the condition of the property when turned over to the carrier and when received from the carrier.

§ 1261.108 Recovery from carriers, insurers, and other third parties.

(a) *General.* NASA is not an insurer and does not underwrite all personal property losses that an employee may sustain. Employees are encouraged to carry private insurance to the maximum extent practicable to avoid large losses or losses which may not be recoverable from NASA. The procedures set forth in this section are designed to

enable the claimant to obtain the maximum amount of compensation for personal property loss or damage. Failure of the claimant to comply with these procedures may reduce or preclude payment of the claim.

(b) *Demand on carrier, contractor, warehouse owner/operator, or insurer.* When it appears that property has been damaged or lost under circumstances in which a carrier, warehouse owner/operator, contractor or insurer may be responsible, the claimant shall make a written demand on such party, either before or after submitting a claim against NASA. The Administrator or designee, if requested, will assist in making demand on the third party. No such demand need be made if, in the opinion of the Administrator or designee, it would be impracticable or any recovery would be insignificant, or if circumstances preclude the claimant from making timely demand.

(c) *Action subsequent to demand.* A copy of the demand and of any related correspondence shall be submitted to the Administrator or designee. If the carrier, insurer, or other third party offers a settlement which is less than the amount of the demand, the claimant shall consult with the Administrator or designee before accepting the amount offered. The claimant shall also notify the Administrator or designee promptly of any other action by a third party, including settlement, partial settlement, or denial of liability.

(d) *Application of recovery.* When the amount recovered from a carrier, insurer, or other third party is greater than or equal to the claimant's total loss as determined under this subpart, no compensation is allowable under this subpart. When the amount recovered is less than such total loss, the allowable amount is determined by deducting the recovery from the amount of total loss subject to the maximum set forth in § 1261.102.

(e) *Transfer of rights.* The claimant shall assign to the United States, to the extent of any payment accepted on a claim, all rights, title, and interest in any claim he/she may have against any carrier, insurer, or other party arising out of the accident or incident on which the claim against the United

States is based. The claimant shall also, upon request, furnish such evidence and other cooperation as may be required to enable the United States to enforce the claim. After payment on the claim by the United States, the claimant shall, upon receipt of any payment from a carrier, insurer, or other party, notify the Administrator or designee and pay the proceeds to the United States to the extent required under the provisions of paragraph (d).

§ 1261.109 Computation of allowance.

(a) The amount allowed for damage to or loss of any item of property may not exceed the cost of the item (either the price paid in cash or property, or the value at the time of acquisition if not acquired by purchase or exchange). There will be no allowance for replacement cost or for appreciation in the value of the property. Subject to these limitations, the amount allowable is either:

(1) The depreciated value, immediately prior to the loss or damage of property lost or damaged beyond economical repair, less any salvage value; or

(2) The reasonable cost of repairs, when property is economically repairable: Provided, That the cost of repairs does not exceed the amount allowable under paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

(b) Depreciation in value is determined by considering the type of article involved, its cost, its condition when damaged or lost, and the time elapsed between the date of acquisition and the date of damage or loss, with appropriate recognition of current replacement value.

(c) *Limitation on agent or attorney fees.* No more than 10 per centum of the amount paid in settlement of each individual claim submitted and settled shall be paid or delivered to or received by an agent or attorney on account of services rendered in connection with that claim, any contract to the contrary notwithstanding (31 U.S.C. 243).

§ 1261.110 Settlement of claims.

(a) *Settlement officials.* (1) Claims in the amount of \$5,000 or more will be acted upon by the General Counsel. Claims less than \$5,000 will be acted upon by the Chief Counsel of the NASA

Field Installation where the employee was assigned at the time of the loss or damage or the Assistant General Counsel for Litigation for NASA Headquarters claims.

(2) Claims arising for \$5,000 or more shall be investigated by the Chief Counsel or Assistant General Counsel for Litigation, as appropriate, and a report and recommendation thereon shall be forwarded to the General Counsel.

(b) *Action by settlement official.* (1) For each claim, the settlement official shall complete a report in duplicate on NASA Form 1204 and retain a claim file consisting of the original claim, the report, and any other relevant evidence or documents.

(2) When a claim is allowed in an amount acceptable to the claimant, the settlement official shall prepare a "Voucher for Payment of Employees' Personal Property Claims" (NASA Form 1220), have it properly executed by the claimant, and forward it with a copy of the approved claim (NASA Form 1204) to the appropriate NASA fiscal or financial management office for payment.

(3) When a claim is disallowed or is partially allowed in an amount unacceptable to the claimant, the settlement official shall notify the claimant in writing of the action taken and the reasons therefor. If not satisfied with the action taken, the claimant may, within 60 days after receipt of such notice, request reconsideration of the claim and may submit any new evidence that he/she feels to be pertinent to the claim. If such a claim has been disallowed at the field installation level, the claimant may request reconsideration by the field installation, or by the General Counsel, or both.

(c) *Final and conclusive.* The settlement of a claim under this subpart, whether by full or partial allowance or disallowance, is final and conclusive.

Subpart 1261.2 [Reserved]

Subpart 1261.3—Claims Against NASA or Its Employees for Damage to or Loss of Property or Personal Injury or Death—Accruing On or After January 18, 1967

AUTHORITY: 28 U.S.C. 2671–2680, 42 U.S.C. 2473(c)(13), and 28 CFR part 14.

§ 1261.300 Scope of subpart.

This subpart sets forth the procedures for:

(a) The submission of, and action by NASA upon, claims against the United States arising out of the activities of NASA for damage to or loss of property or personal injury or death, and designates the NASA officials authorized to act upon such claims.

(b) The handling of lawsuits against NASA employee(s) for damage to or loss of property or personal injury or death resulting from a NASA employee's activities within the scope of his/her office or employment.

§ 1261.301 Authority.

(a) Under the provisions of the Federal Tort Claims Act, as amended (see 28 U.S.C. 2671–2680), and subject to its limitations, the Administrator or designee is authorized to consider, ascertain, adjust, determine, compromise, and settle any claim for money damages against the United States for injury or loss of property or personal injury or death caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of any NASA employee while acting within the scope of his/her office or employment, under circumstances where the United States, if a private person, would be liable to the claimant in accordance with the law of the place where the act or omission occurred. In exercising such authority, the Administrator or designee is required to act in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Attorney General (28 CFR part 14). An award, compromise, or settlement in excess of \$25,000 may be effected only with the prior written approval of the Attorney General or designee.

(b) Under sec. 203(c)(13)(A) of the National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958, as amended, 42 U.S.C.

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2473(c)(13)(A), NASA is authorized to consider, ascertain, adjust, determine, settle, and pay, on behalf of the United States, in full satisfaction thereof, any claim for \$25,000 or less against the United States for bodily injury, death or damage to or loss of real or personal property resulting from the conduct of NASA's functions as specified in 42 U.S.C. 2473(a). At the discretion of NASA, a claim may be settled and paid under this authority even though the United States could not be held legally liable to the claimant.

(c) Under 42 U.S.C. 2473(c)(13)(B), if NASA considers that a claim in excess of \$25,000 is meritorious and would otherwise be covered by 42 U.S.C. 2473(c)(13)(A), NASA may report the facts and circumstances of the claim to the Congress for its consideration or to the Comptroller General as provided in the "Supplemental Appropriations Act, 1978," Pub. L. 95-240 (92 Stat. 107), 31 U.S.C. 724a.

(d) Under 28 U.S.C. 2679, the Attorney General of the United States shall defend any civil action or proceeding brought in any court against a Government employee for injury or loss of property or personal injury or death, resulting from the operation of a motor vehicle by the Government employee while acting within the scope of office or employment. In effect, this legislation is designed to protect an employee driving a motor vehicle on Government business by converting such a civil court action or proceeding against the employee into a claim against the United States: Provided, That the employee was acting within the scope of employment at the time of the accident. The remedy against the United States provided by 28 U.S.C. 2672 (administrative adjustment of claims) and 28 U.S.C. 1346(b) (civil action against the United States) then becomes the plaintiff's exclusive remedy.

§ 1261.302 Claim.

Unless the context otherwise requires, *claim* means a claim for money damages against the United States arising out of the activities of NASA, for injury or loss of property, or personal injury or death. A claim "arises" at the place where the injury, loss, or death occurs.

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§ 1261.303 Claimant.

(a) A claim for damage to or loss of property may be presented by the owner of the property, duly authorized agent or legal representative.

(b) A claim for personal injury may be presented by the injured person, duly authorized agent, or legal representative.

(c) A claim based on death may be presented by the executor(rix) or administrator(rix) of the decedent's estate, or by any other person legally entitled to assert such a claim in accordance with applicable State law.

(d) A claim for loss wholly compensated by an insurer with the rights of a subrogee may be presented by the insurer. A claim for loss partially compensated by an insurer with the rights of a subrogee may be presented by the parties individually as their respective interests appear, or jointly.

(e) A claim presented by an agent or legal representative shall be presented in the name of the claimant, be signed by the agent or legal representative, show the title or legal capacity of the person signing and be accompanied by evidence of the agent's or legal representative's authority to present a claim on behalf of the claimant as agent, executor(rix), administrator(rix), parent, guardian, or other representative.

§ 1261.304 Place of filing claim.

A claim arising in the United States should be submitted to the Chief Counsel of the NASA Installation whose activities are believed to have given rise to the claimed injury, loss, or death. If the identity of such installation is not known, or if the claim arose in a foreign country, the claim should be submitted to the General Counsel, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Washington, DC 20546.

§ 1261.305 Form of claim.

(a) The official designated in § 1261.308 shall, prior to acting on a claim, require the claimant to submit a completed Standard Form 95—"Claim for Damage, Injury or Death."

(b) NASA installations will furnish copies of Standard Form 95 upon request.

§ 1261.306 Evidence and information required.

(a) The circumstances alleged to have given rise to the claim, and the amount claimed, should, so far as possible, be substantiated by competent evidence. Supporting statements, estimates, and the like should, if possible, be obtained from disinterested parties. For specific guidance as to Federal Tort Claims Act claims, see Department of Justice regulations on “Administrative Claims under Federal Tort Claims Act” at 28 CFR part 14.

(b) In addition to the evidence and information required under paragraph (a), any claimant shall be required to submit information as to the amount of money or other property received as damages or compensation, or which the claimant may be entitled to receive, by reason of the claimed injury, loss, or death from persons other than NASA or NASA employees. (Such persons include, but are not limited to, insurers, employers, and persons whose conduct was a cause of the accident or incident.)

(c) Any document in other than the English language should be accompanied by an English translation.

§ 1261.307 Time limitations.

(a) A claim may not be acted upon pursuant to the Federal Tort Claims Act unless it is presented to NASA within 2 years after it accrued.

(b) A claim may not be acted upon pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 2473(c)(13)(A) or (B) unless it is presented to NASA within 2 years after the occurrence of the accident or incident out of which the claim arose.

(c) A claim shall be deemed to have been presented to NASA when NASA receives from a claimant or duly authorized agent or legal representative an executed Standard Form 95 or other written notification of an incident or accident, accompanied by a claim in a sum certain.

§ 1261.308 NASA officials authorized to act upon claims.

(a) Claims in the amount of \$10,000 or more will be acted upon as directed by the General Counsel;

(b) Claims less than \$10,000 will be acted upon by the Chief Counsel of the

NASA Field Installation where the employee was assigned at the time of the loss or damage or the Assistant General Counsel for Litigation for NASA Headquarters claims.

(c) Claims of \$10,000 or more, pursuant either to the Federal Tort Claims Act, or 42 U.S.C. 2473(c)(13), shall be acted upon only with the prior approval of the General Counsel. Such claims shall be forwarded to the General Counsel for approval, if the Chief Counsel or the Assistant General Counsel for Litigation is of the opinion that the claim may be meritorious and otherwise suitable for settlement under any authority. A claim so forwarded should be accompanied by a report of the facts of the claim, based upon such investigation as may be appropriate, and a recommendation as to the action to be taken.

(d) Claims acted upon by NASA officials pursuant to this section shall be acted upon pursuant to the Federal Tort Claims Act, or 42 U.S.C. 2473(c)(13)(A) or (B), as the NASA official deems appropriate.

§ 1261.309 Action under the Federal Tort Claims Act.

Where a claim is to be acted upon pursuant to the Federal Tort Claims Act, action shall be taken in accordance with 28 U.S.C. 2672, other provisions of the Federal Tort Claims Act as may be applicable (e.g., 28 U.S.C. 2680), and regulations prescribed by the Attorney General which appear at 28 CFR part 14.

§ 1261.310 Investigation of claims.

The officials designated in § 1261.308 shall conduct such investigation of a claim as deemed appropriate. The officials may request any NASA office or other Federal agency to assist in the investigation.

§ 1261.311 Claims requiring Department of Justice approval or consultation.

(a) When in the opinion of the NASA official designated in § 1261.308, Department of Justice approval or consultation may be required, pursuant to 28 CFR part 14, in connection with a

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claim being acted upon under the Federal Tort Claims Act, the following papers shall be forwarded to the General Counsel:

(1) A short and concise statement of the facts of the claim.

(2) Copies of all relevant portions of the claim file.

(3) A statement of the recommendations or views of the forwarding official.

(b) A claim forwarded to the General Counsel in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section, or upon which the General Counsel is acting pursuant to § 1261.308(c), shall be referred to the Department of Justice when, in the opinion of the General Counsel, Department of Justice approval or consultation is required or may be appropriate.

§ 1261.312 Action on approved claims.

(a) Upon settlement of a claim, the official designated in § 1261.308 will prepare and have executed by the claimant a Voucher for Payment of Tort Claims (NASA Form 616) if the claim has been acted upon pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 2473(c)(13), or a Voucher for Payment under Federal Tort Claims Act (Standard Form 1145) if the claim has been acted upon pursuant to the Federal Tort Claims Act. The form will then be referred to the cognizant NASA installation fiscal or financial management office for appropriate action.

(b) When a claimant is represented by an attorney, both the claimant and attorney will be designated as “payees” on the voucher, and the check will be delivered to the attorney whose address shall appear on the voucher.

(c) Acceptance by the claimant, agent, or legal representative, of any award, compromise, or settlement made pursuant to this subpart shall be final and conclusive on the claimant, agent or legal representative and any other person on whose behalf or for whose benefit the claim has been presented, and shall constitute a complete release of any claim against the United States and against any employee of the Government whose act or omission gave rise to the claim, by reason of the same subject matter.

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§ 1261.313 Required notification in the event of denial.

Final denial of a claim shall be in writing and shall be sent to the claimant, the attorney, or legal representative by certified or registered mail. The notification of final denial may include a statement of the reasons for the denial and shall include a statement that if the claimant is dissatisfied with NASA’s action, the claimant may file suit in an appropriate U.S. District Court not later than 6 months after the date of mailing the notification.

§ 1261.314 [Reserved]

§ 1261.315 Procedures for the handling of lawsuits against NASA employees arising within the scope of their office or employment.

The following procedures shall be followed in the event that a civil action or proceeding is brought, in any court, against any employee of NASA (or against the estate) for injury or loss of property or personal injury or death, resulting from the NASA employee’s activities while acting within the scope of office or employment:

(a) After being served with process or pleadings in such an action or proceeding, the employee (or the executor(rix) or administrator(rix) of the estate) shall immediately deliver all such process and pleadings or an attested true copy thereof, together with a fully detailed report of the circumstances of the accident giving rise to the court action or proceeding, to the following officials:

(1) The Assistant General Counsel for Litigation insofar as actions or proceedings against employees of NASA Headquarters are concerned; or

(2) The Chief Counsel of the NASA Installation at which the employee is employed, insofar as actions against other than NASA Headquarters employees are concerned.

(b) Upon receipt of such process and pleadings, the Assistant General Counsel for Litigation or the Chief Counsel of the NASA Installation receiving the same shall furnish to the U.S. Attorney for the district embracing the place where the action or proceeding is

brought and, if appropriate, the Director, Torts Branch, Civil Division, Department of Justice, the following:

(1) Copies of all such process and pleadings in the action or proceeding promptly upon receipt thereof; and

(2) A report containing a statement of the circumstances of the incident giving rise to the action or proceeding, and all data bearing upon the question of whether the employee was acting within the scope of office or employment with NASA at the time of the incident, at the earliest possible date, or within such time as shall be fixed by the U.S. Attorney upon request.

(c) The Assistant General Counsel for Litigation or a Chief Counsel acting pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section shall submit the following documents to the General Counsel, who is hereby designated to receive such documents on behalf of the Administrator:

(1) Copies of all process and pleadings submitted to a U.S. Attorney in accordance with paragraph (b).

(2) In addition, where the action or proceeding is for damages in excess of \$25,000, or where (in the opinion of the Chief Counsel) such action or proceeding involves a new precedent, a new point of law, or a question of policy, copies of reports and all other papers submitted to the U.S. Attorney.

§ 1261.316 Policy.

(a) The National Aeronautics and Space Administration may indemnify a present or former NASA employee, who is personally named as a defendant in any civil suit in state or Federal court, or in an arbitration proceeding or other proceeding seeking damages against that employee personally, for any verdict, judgment, appeal bond, or other monetary award which is rendered against such employee, provided that the conduct giving rise to the verdict, judgment, appeal bond, or award was taken within the scope of his or her employment and that such indemnification is in the interest of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, as determined by the Administrator or designee.

(b) The National Aeronautics and Space Administration may settle or compromise a personal damage claim against a present or former NASA em-

ployee by the payment of available funds, at any time, provided the alleged conduct giving rise to the personal damage claim was taken within the employee's scope of employment and that such settlement or compromise is in the interest of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, as determined by the Administrator or designee.

(c) Absent exceptional circumstances as determined by the Administrator or designee, the agency will not entertain a request either to agree to indemnify or to settle a personal damage claim before entry of an adverse verdict, judgment, or award.

(d) A present or past NASA employee may request indemnification to satisfy a verdict, judgment, or award entered against that employee. The employee shall submit a written request, with appropriate documentation including copies of the verdict, judgment, appeal bond, award, or settlement proposal to the General Counsel, who shall make a recommended disposition of the request. Where appropriate, the agency shall seek the views of the Department of Justice. The General Counsel shall forward the request, the accompanying documentation, and the General Counsel's recommendation to the Administrator for decision.

(e) Any payment under this section either to indemnify a National Aeronautics and Space Administration employee or to settle a personal damage claim shall be contingent upon the availability of appropriated funds of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

[53 FR 27482, July 21, 1988]

§ 1261.317 Attorney-client privilege.

(a) Attorneys employed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration participate in the process utilized for the purpose of determining whether the agency should request the Department of Justice to provide representation to a present or former agency employee sued, subpoenaed, or charged in his/her individual capacity, and attorneys employed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration provide assistance in obtaining

§ 1261.400

representation of such an agency employee. In these roles, agency attorneys undertake a full and traditional attorney-client relationship with the employee with respect to application of the attorney-client privilege. If representation is authorized, National Aeronautics and Space Administration attorneys who assist in the representation of a present or former employee also undertake a full and traditional attorney-client relationship with that employee with respect to the attorney-client privilege.

(b) Any adverse information communicated by the client-employee to an agency attorney during the course of such attorney-client relationship shall not be disclosed to anyone, either inside or outside the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, other than attorneys responsible for representation of the employee, unless such disclosure is authorized by the employee. Such adverse information shall continue to be fully protected whether or not representation is provided and even though representation may be denied or discontinued.

[53 FR 27483, July 21, 1988]

Subpart 1261.4—Collection of Civil Claims of the United States Arising Out of the Activities of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

SOURCE: 52 FR 19487, May 26, 1987, unless otherwise noted.

§ 1261.400 Scope of subpart.

(a) These regulations do the following:

(1) Prescribe standards for the administrative collection, compromise, suspension or termination of collection, and referral to the General Accounting Office (GAO), and/or to the Department of Justice (DJ) for litigation, of civil claims as defined by 31 U.S.C. 3701(b), arising out of the activities of NASA;

(2) Designate the responsible NASA officials authorized to effect actions hereunder; and

(3) Require compliance with the GAO/DJ joint regulations at 4 CFR parts 101 through 105 and the Office of Personnel

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Management (OPM) regulations at 5 CFR part 550, subpart K.

(b) Failure to comply with any provision of the GAO/DJ or OPM regulations shall not be available as a defense to any debtor (4 CFR 101.8).

(c) These regulations do not include any claim based in whole or in part on violation of the anti-trust laws; any claim as to which there is an indication of fraud, the presentation of a false claim, or misrepresentation on the part of the debtor or any party having an interest in the claim; tax claims; or Federal interagency claims (4 CFR 101.3).

§ 1261.401 Definitions.

(a) *Claim and debt.* The terms denote a civil claim arising from the activities of NASA for an amount of money, or return or value of property (see 4 CFR 101.5), owing to the United States from any person, organization, or entity, except another Federal agency. The words *claim* and *debt* have been used interchangeably and are considered synonymous.

(b) *Delinquent debt.* The debt is *delinquent* if it has not been paid by the date specified in the initial written notification (e.g., § 1261.407) or applicable contractual agreement, unless other acceptable (to NASA) payment arrangements have been made by that date, or if, at any time thereafter, the debtor fails to satisfy an obligation under the payment agreement.

(c) *Referral for litigation.* Referral through the NASA installation's legal counsel to the Department of Justice (Main Justice or the United States Attorney, as appropriate) for legal proceedings.

§ 1261.402 Delegation of authority.

The following NASA officials are delegated authority, as qualified by § 1261.403, to take such action as is authorized by these regulations to collect, compromise, suspend/terminate collection, and upon consultation with and through legal counsel, to refer the claim (as applicable) to the GAO or Department of Justice:

(a) For field installations, with regard to subpart 1261.4 and subpart 1261.5: The Director of the Installation or a designee who reports directly to

the Installation Director. A copy of such designation, if any, shall be sent to the Director, Financial Management Division, NASA Headquarters.

(b) For Headquarters, with regard to subpart 1261.4 and subpart 1261.5: The Associate Administrator for Management or a designee who reports directly to the Associate Administrator for Management. A copy of such designation, if any, shall be sent to the Director, Financial Management Division, NASA Headquarters.

(c) With respect to the analysis required by § 1261.413: The NASA Comptroller or designee.

(d) NASA wide, with regard to subpart 1261.6: The NASA Comptroller or designee.

(e) NASA wide, for complying with pertinent provisions under these regulations for agency hearing or review (see §§ 1261.408(b), 1261.503, and 1261.603(c)): The NASA General Counsel or designee.

§ 1261.403 Consultation with appropriate officials; negotiation.

(a) The authority pursuant to § 1261.402 to determine to forego collection of interest, to accept payment of a claim in installments, or, as to claims which do not exceed \$20,000, exclusive of interest and related charges, to compromise a claim or to refrain from doing so, or to refrain from, suspend or terminate collection action, shall be exercised only after consultation with legal counsel for the particular installation and the following NASA officials or designees, who may also be requested to negotiate the appropriate agreements or arrangements with the debtor:

(1) With respect to claims against contractors or grantees arising in connection with contracts or grants—the contracting officer and the financial management officer of the installation concerned.

(2) With respect to claims against commercial carriers for loss of or damage to NASA freight shipment—the cognizant transportation officers or the official who determined the amount of the claim, as appropriate, and the financial management officers of the installation concerned.

(3) With respect to claims against employees of NASA incident to their employment—the personnel officer and the financial management officer of the installation concerned.

(b) The appropriate counsel's office shall review and concur in the following:

(1) All communications to and agreements with debtors relating to claims collection.

(2) All determinations to compromise a claim, or to suspend or terminate collection action.

(3) All referrals of claims, other than referrals to the Department of Justice pursuant to § 1261.404(b)(1).

(4) All documents releasing debtors from liability to the United States.

(5) All other actions relating to the collection of a claim which in the opinion of the official designated in or pursuant to § 1261.402 may affect the rights of the United States.

§ 1261.404 Services of the Inspector General.

(a) At the request of an official designated in or pursuant to § 1261.402, the Office of the Inspector General will, where practicable, conduct such investigations as may assist in the collection, compromise, or referral of claims of the United States, including investigations to determine the location and financial resources of the debtors.

(b) Any claim which, in the opinion of an official designated in or pursuant to § 1261.402 or § 1261.403, may indicate fraud, presentation of a false claim, or misrepresentation, on the part of the debtor or any other party having an interest in the claim, shall be referred by the designated official to the Inspector General (IG), NASA Headquarters, or to the nearest office of the NASA IG. After an investigation as may be appropriate, the IG shall:

(1) Notice the official, from whom the claim was received, of the findings and refer the claim to the Department of Justice in accordance with the provisions of 4 CFR 101.3; or

(2) If it were found that there is no such indication of fraud, the presentation of a false claim, or misrepresentation, return the claim to the official from whom it was received.

§ 1261.405 Subdivision of claims not authorized; other administrative proceedings.

(a) *Subdivision of claims.* Claims may not be subdivided to avoid the \$20,000 ceiling, exclusive of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, for purposes of compromise (§ 1261.414) or suspension or termination of collection (§ 1261.416). The debtor's liability arising from a particular transaction or contract shall be considered a single claim (4 CFR 101.6).

(b) Required administrative proceedings. Nothing contained in these regulations is intended to require NASA to omit, foreclose, or duplicate administrative proceedings required by contract or other applicable laws and implementing regulations (4 CFR 101.7).

§ 1261.406 Aggressive collection action; documentation.

(a) NASA shall take aggressive action, on a timely basis with effective followup, to collect all claims of the United States for money or property arising out of NASA activities, and to cooperate with the other Federal agencies in debt collection activities.

(b) All administrative collection action shall be documented and the bases for compromise, or for termination or suspension of collection action, should be set out in detail. Such documentation, including the Claims Collection Litigation Report under § 1261.417(e), should be retained in the appropriate claims file.

§ 1261.407 Demand for payment; limitation periods.

(a) Appropriate written demands shall be made promptly upon a debtor of the United States in terms which inform the debtor of the consequences of failure to cooperate. A total of three progressively stronger written demands at not more than 30-day intervals will normally be made unless a response to the first or second demand indicates that a further demand would be futile and the debtor's response does not require rebuttal. In determining the timing of demand letters, NASA will give due regard to the need to act promptly so that, as a general rule, if necessary to refer the debt to the De-

partment of Justice for litigation, such referral can be made within one year of the agency's final determination of the fact and the amount of the debt. When necessary to protect the Government's interests (for example, to prevent the statute of limitations, 28 U.S.C. 2415, from expiring), written demand may be preceded by other appropriate actions, including immediate referral for litigation.

(b) The initial demand letter should inform the debtor of:

(1) The basis for the indebtedness and whatever rights the debtor may have to seek review within the agency;

(2) The applicable standards for assessing interest, penalties, and administrative costs (§ 1261.412); and

(3) The date by which payment is to be made, which normally should be not more than 30 days from the date that the initial demand letter was mailed or hand delivered. The responsible official should exercise care to ensure that demand letters are mailed or hand delivered on the same day that they are actually dated. Apart from these requirements, there is no prescribed format for demand letters. However, as appropriate to the circumstances, the responsible official may consider including, either in the initial demand letter or in subsequent letters, such items the NASA's willingness to discuss alternative methods of payment, or intentions with respect to referral of the debt to the Department of Justice for litigation.

(c) NASA should respond promptly to communications from the debtor, within 30 days whenever feasible, and should advise debtors who dispute the debt to furnish available evidence to support their contentions.

(d) If either prior to the initiation of, any time during, or after completion of the demand cycle, a determination to pursue offset is made, then the procedures specified in subparts 1261.5 and 1261.6, as applicable, should be followed. The availability of funds for offset and NASA's determination to pursue it release the agency from the necessity of further compliance with paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) of this section. If the agency has not already sent the first demand letter, the agency's

written notification of its intent to offset must give the debtor the opportunity to make voluntary payment, a requirement which will be satisfied by compliance with the notice requirements of § 1261.502 or § 1261.603(a), as applicable.

(e) NASA should undertake personal interviews with its debtors whenever this is feasible, having regard for the amounts involved and the proximity of agency representatives to such debtors; and may attempt to effect compromise of the claim in accordance with § 1261.414.

(f) When a debtor is employed by the Federal government or is a member of the military establishment or the Coast Guard, and collection by offset cannot be accomplished in accordance with subpart 1261.6, the employing agency will be contacted for the purpose of arranging with the debtor for payment of the indebtedness by allotment or otherwise in accordance with section 206 of Executive Order 11222, May 8, 1965, 30 FR 6469, which provides that: "An employee is expected to meet all just financial obligations, especially those—such as Federal, State, or local taxes—which are imposed by law" (4 CFR 102.81).

§ 1261.408 Use of consumer reporting agency.

(a) The term *consumer reporting agency* has the meaning provided in the Federal Claims Collection Act of 1966, as amended (31 U.S.C. 3701(a)(3)):

(1) A consumer reporting agency as that term is defined in section 603(f) of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (15 U.S.C. 1681a(f)); or

(2) A person that, for money or on a cooperative basis, regularly—

(i) Gets information on consumers to give the information to a consumer reporting agency; or

(ii) Serves as a marketing agent under an arrangement allowing a third party to get the information from a consumer reporting agency.

(b) NASA Headquarters Financial Management Division, shall be the focal contact between NASA and consumer reporting agencies. The following procedures shall apply when such agencies are employed by NASA:

(1) After the appropriate notice pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(4) has been published, NASA may disclose, in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552a(b)(12), information about a debtor to a consumer reporting agency. Such information may include:

(i) That a claim has been determined to be valid and is overdue (including violation by debtor of a repayment plan or other claim settlement agreement);

(ii) The name, address, taxpayer identification number, and any other information necessary to establish the identity of the individual responsible for the claim;

(iii) Amount, status, and history of the claim;

(iv) Program or pertinent activity under which the claim arose.

(2) Before disclosing the information specified in paragraph (b)(1) of this section, NASA shall comply with 31 U.S.C. 3711(f) by:

(i) Taking reasonable action to locate the individual if a current address is not available;

(ii) If a current address is available, noticing the individual by certified mail, return receipt requested, that: The designated NASA official has reviewed the claim and determined that it is valid and overdue; within not less than 60 days after sending this notice, NASA intends to disclose to a consumer reporting agency the specific information to be disclosed under paragraph (b)(1) of this section; the individual may request a complete explanation of the claim, dispute the information in the records of NASA about the claim, and file for an administrative review or repeal of the claim or for reconsideration of the initial decision on the claim.

(3) If an administrative review or reconsideration is requested, the responsible official or designee shall refer the request to the appropriate NASA legal counsel for an impartial review and determination by counsel or designee based on the entire written record. If the reviewer cannot resolve the question of indebtedness based upon the available documentary evidence, verified written statements by the debtor or the responsible official may

be requested on any pertinent matter not addressed by the available record.

(c) If the information is to be submitted to a consumer reporting agency, the responsible official shall obtain a verified statement from such agency which gives satisfactory assurances that the particular agency is complying with all laws of the United States related to providing consumer credit information; and thereafter ensure that the consumer reporting agency is promptly informed of any substantial change in the condition or amount of the claim, or, on request of such agency, promptly verify or correct information about the claim.

§ 1261.409 Contracting for collection services.

(a) When NASA determines that there is a need to contract for collection services, the following conditions must attach:

(1) The authority to resolve disputes, compromise claims, suspend or terminate collection action, and refer the matter for litigation must be retained by NASA.

(2) The contractor shall be subject to the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, to the extent specified in 5 U.S.C. 552a(m), and to applicable Federal and State laws and regulations pertaining to debt collection practices—for example, the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (15 U.S.C. 1692), and 26 U.S.C. 6103(p)(4) and applicable regulations of the Internal Revenue Service;

(3) The contractor must be required to account strictly for all amounts collected; and

(4) The contractor must agree to provide any data contained in its files relating to collection actions and related reports, current address of debtor, and reasonably current credit information upon returning an account to NASA for subsequent referral to the Department of Justice for litigation.

(b) Funding of collection service contracts:

(1) NASA may fund a collection service contract on a fixed-fee basis—that is, payment of a fixed fee determined without regard to the amount actually collected under the contract. However, such contract may be entered into only if and to the extent provided in the ap-

propriation act or other legislation, except that this requirement does not apply to the use of a revolving fund authorized by statute. Accordingly, payment of the fixed-fee must be charged to available agency appropriations. See 4 CFR 102.6(b)(1) and (3).

(2) NASA may also fund a collection service contract on a contingent-fee basis—that is, by including a provision in the contract permitting the contractor to deduct its fee from amounts collected under the contract. The fee should be based on a percentage of the amount collected, consistent with prevailing commercial practice. See 4 CFR 102.6(b)(2).

(3) Except as authorized under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, or unless otherwise specifically provided by law, NASA must deposit all amounts recovered under collection service contracts (or by NASA employees on behalf of the agency) in the Treasury Department as miscellaneous receipts pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3302. See 4 CFR 102.6(b)(4).

§ 1261.410 Suspension or revocation of license or eligibility; liquidation of collateral.

(a) In seeking the collection of statutory penalties, forfeitures, or debts provided for as an enforcement aid or for compelling compliance, NASA will give serious consideration to the suspension or revocation of licenses or other privileges for any inexcusable, prolonged, or repeated failure of a debtor to pay such a claim. In the case of a contractor under 48 CFR chapter 18, NASA will comply with the debarment, suspension, and ineligibility requirements of the NASA Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (NASA/FAR Supplement) at 48 CFR 1809.4. Likewise, in making, guaranteeing, insuring, acquiring, or participating in loans, NASA will give serious consideration to suspending or disqualifying any lender, contractor, broker, borrower, or other debtor from doing further business with it or engaging in programs sponsored by it if such a debtor fails to pay its debts to the Government within a reasonable time. The failure of any surety to honor its obligations in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 9305 must be reported to the

Treasury Department at once. Notification that a surety's certificate of authority to do business with the Federal Government has been revoked or forfeited by the Treasury Department will be forwarded by that Department to all interested agencies.

(b) If NASA is holding security or collateral which may be liquidated and the proceeds applied on debts due it through the exercise of a power of sale in the security instrument or a non-judicial foreclosure, it should do so by such procedures if the debtor fails to pay the debt within a reasonable time after demand, unless the cost of disposing of the collateral will be disproportionate to its value or special circumstances require judicial foreclosure. NASA will provide the debtor with reasonable notice of the sale, an accounting of any surplus proceeds, and any other procedures required by applicable contract or law. Collection from other sources, including liquidation of security or collateral, is not a prerequisite to requiring payment by a surety or insurance concern unless such action is expressly required by statute or contract.

§ 1261.411 Collection in installments.

(a) Whenever feasible, and except as otherwise provided by law, debts owed to the United States, together with interest penalties, and administrative costs as required by § 1261.412, should be collected in full in one lump sum. This is true whether the debt is being collected by administrative offset or by another method, including voluntary payment. However, if the debtor is financially unable to pay the indebtedness in one lump sum, payment may be accepted in regular installments. Debtors who represent that they are unable to pay the debt in one lump sum must submit financial statements. If NASA agrees to accept payment in regular installments, it will obtain a legally enforceable written agreement from the debtor which specifies all of the terms of the arrangement and which contains a provision accelerating the debt in the event the debtor defaults. The size and frequency of installment payments should bear a reasonable relation to the size of the debt and the debtor's ability to pay. If possible, the install-

ment payments should be sufficient in size and frequency to liquidate the Government's claim in not more than 3 years. Installment payments of less than \$50 per month should be accepted only if justifiable on the grounds of financial hardship or for some other reasonable cause. If the claim is unsecured, an executed confess-judgment note, comparable to the Department of Justice Form USA-70a, should be obtained from a debtor when the total amount of the deferred installments will exceed \$750. Such notes may be sought when an unsecured obligation of a lesser amount is involved. When attempting to obtain confess-judgment notes, the debtor should be provided with written explanation of the consequences of signing the note, and documentation should be maintained sufficient to demonstrate that the debtor has signed the note knowingly and voluntarily. Security for deferred payments other than a confess-judgment note may be accepted in appropriate cases. NASA, at its option, may accept installment payments notwithstanding the refusal of a debtor to execute a confess-judgment note or to give other security.

(b) If the debtor owes more than one debt and designates how a voluntary installment payment is to be applied as among those debts, that designation must be followed. If the debtor does not designate the application of the payment, agencies should apply payments to the various debts in accordance with the best interests of the United States, as determined by the facts and circumstances of the particular case, paying special attention to applicable statutes of limitations.

§ 1261.412 Interest, penalties, and administrative costs.

(a) Pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3717, NASA shall assess interest, penalties, and administrative costs on debts owed to the United States. Before assessing these charges, NASA must mail or hand deliver a written notice to the debtor explaining the requirements concerning the charges (see § 1261.407(b)).

(b) Interest shall accrue from the date on which notice of the debt and the interest requirements is first mailed or hand delivered to the debtor

(on or after October 25, 1982), using the most current address that is available to the agency. If an “advance billing” procedure is used—that is, a bill is mailed before the debt is actually owed—it can include the required interest notification in the advance billing, but interest may not start to accrue before the debt is actually owed. Designated officials should exercise care to ensure that the notices required by this section are dated and mailed or hand delivered on the same day.

(c) The rate of interest assessed shall be the rate of the current value of funds to the United States Treasury (i.e., the Treasury tax and loan account rate), as prescribed and published by the Secretary of the Treasury in the FEDERAL REGISTER and the Treasury Fiscal Requirements Manual Bulletins annually or quarterly, in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3717. NASA may assess a higher rate of interest if it reasonably determines that a higher rate is necessary to protect the interests of the United States. The rate of interest, as initially assessed, shall remain fixed for the duration of the indebtedness, except that where a debtor has defaulted on a repayment agreement and seeks to enter into a new agreement, NASA may set a new interest rate which reflects the current value of funds to the Treasury Department at the time the new agreement is executed. Interest should not be assessed on interest, penalties, or administrative costs required by this section. However, if the debtor defaults on a previous repayment agreement, charges which accrued but were not collected under the defaulted agreement shall be added to the principal to be paid under a new repayment agreement.

(d) NASA shall assess against a debtor charges to cover administrative costs incurred as a result of a delinquent debt—that is, the additional costs incurred in processing and handling the debt because it became delinquent as defined in §1261.401(b). Calculations of administrative costs should be based upon actual costs incurred or upon cost analyses establishing an average of actual additional costs incurred by the agency in proc-

essing and handling claims against other debtors in similar stages of delinquency. Administrative costs may include costs incurred in obtaining a credit report or in using a private debt collector, to the extent they are attributable to delinquency.

(e) NASA shall assess a penalty charge, not to exceed 6 percent a year, on any portion of a debt that is delinquent as defined in §1261.401(b) for more than 90 days. This charge need not be calculated until the 91st day of delinquency, but shall accrue from the date that the debt became delinquent.

(f) When a debt is paid in partial or installment payments, amounts received by the agency shall be applied first to outstanding penalty and administrative cost charges, second to accrued interest, and third to outstanding principal.

(g) NASA must waive the collection of interest on the debt or any portion of the debt which is paid within 30 days after the date on which interest began to accrue. NASA may extend this 30-day period, on a case-by-case basis, if it reasonably determines that such action is appropriate. Also, NASA may waive, in whole or in part, the collection of interest, penalties, and/or administrative costs (assessed under this section) under the criteria specified in §1261.414 relating to the compromise of claims (without regard to the amount of the debt), or if NASA determines that collection of these charges would be against equity and good conscience or not in the best interests of the United States. See 4 CFR 101.13(g). Such optional waivers should be handled on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with officials designated under §1261.403. Examples of situations in which NASA may consider waiving interest and other related charges are:

(1) Pending consideration of a request for reconsideration or administrative review;

(2) Acceptance of an installment plan or other compromise agreement, where there is no indication of lack of good faith on the part of the debtor in not repaying the debt, and the debtor has provided substantiating information of inability to pay or other unavoidable hardship which reasonably prevented the debt from being repaid.

(h) Where a mandatory waiver or review statute applies, interest and related charges may not be assessed for those periods during which collection action must be suspended under § 1261.416(c)(3).

(i) *Exemptions.* (1) The provisions of 31 U.S.C. 3717 do not apply:

(i) To debts owed by any State or local government;

(ii) To debts arising under contracts which were executed prior to, and were in effect on (i.e., were not completed as of) October 25, 1982;

(iii) To debts where an applicable statute, regulation required by statute, loan agreement, or contract either prohibits such charges or explicitly fixes the charges that apply to the debts involved; or

(iv) Debts arising under the Social Security Act, the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, or the tariff laws of the United States.

(2) NASA may, however, assess interest and related charges on debts which are not subject to 31 U.S.C. 3717 to the extent authorized under the common law or other applicable statutory authority.

§ 1261.413 Analysis of costs; automation; prevention of overpayments, delinquencies, or defaults.

The Office of the NASA Comptroller will:

(a) Issue internal procedures to provide for periodic comparison of costs incurred and amounts collected. Data on costs and corresponding recovery rates for debts of different types and in various dollar ranges should be used to compare the cost effectiveness of alternative collection techniques, establish guidelines with respect to points at which costs of further collection efforts are likely to exceed recoveries, and assist in evaluating offers in compromise.

(b) Consider the need, feasibility, and cost effectiveness of automated debt collection operation.

(c) Establish internal controls to identify causes, if any, of overpayments, delinquencies, and defaults, and establish procedures for corrective actions as needs dictate.

§ 1261.414 Compromise of claims.

(a) Designated NASA officials (see §§ 1261.402 and 1261.403) may compromise claims for money or property arising out of the activities of the agency where the claim, exclusive of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, does not exceed \$20,000, prior to the referral of such claims to the General Accounting Office, or to the Department of Justice for litigation. The Comptroller General may exercise such compromise authority with respect to claims referred to the General Accounting Office (GAO) prior to their further referral for litigation. Only the Comptroller General may effect the compromise of a claim that arises out of an exception made by the GAO in the account of an accountable officer, including a claim against the payee, prior to its referral by the GAO for litigation.

(b) When the claim, exclusive of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, exceeds \$20,000, the authority to accept the compromise rests solely with the Department of Justice. NASA should evaluate the offer, using the factors set forth in paragraphs (c) through (f) of this section, and may recommend compromise for reasons under one, or more than one, of those paragraphs. If NASA then wishes to accept the compromise, it must refer the matter to the Department of Justice, using the Claims Collection Litigation Report. See § 1261.417(e) or 4 CFR 105.2(b). Claims for which the gross amount is over \$200,000 shall be referred to the Commercial Litigation Branch, Civil Division, Department of Justice, Washington, DC 20530. Claims for which the gross original amount is \$200,000 or less shall be referred to the United States Attorney in whose judicial district the debtor can be found. The referral should specify the reasons for the agency's recommendation. If NASA has a debtor's firm written offer of compromise which is substantial in amount and the agency is uncertain as to whether the offer should be accepted, it may refer the offer, the supporting data, and particulars concerning the claim to the General Accounting Office or to the Department of Justice. The General Accounting Office or the Department of Justice may

act upon such an offer or return it to the agency with instructions or advice. If NASA wishes to reject the compromise, GAO or Department of Justice approval is not required.

(c) A claim may be compromised pursuant to this section if NASA cannot collect the full amount because of the debtor's inability to pay the full amount within a reasonable time, or the refusal of the debtor to pay the claim in full and the Government's inability to enforce collection in full within a reasonable time by enforced collection proceedings. In determining the debtor's inability or refusal to pay, the following factors, among others, may be considered:

- (1) Age and health of the debtor;
- (2) Present and potential income;
- (3) Inheritance prospects;
- (4) The possibility that assets have been concealed or improperly transferred by the debtor;
- (5) The availability of assets or income which may be realized by enforced collection proceedings; and
- (6) The applicable exemptions available to the debtor under State and Federal law in determining the Government's ability to enforce collection. Uncertainty as to the price which collateral or other property will bring at forced sale may properly be considered in determining the Government's ability to enforce collection. The compromise should be for an amount which bears a reasonable relation to the amount which can be recovered by enforced collection procedures, having regard for the exemptions available to the debtor and the time which collection will take.

(d) A claim may be compromised if there is a real doubt concerning the Government's ability to prove its case in court for the full amount claimed, either because of the legal issues involved or a bona fide dispute as to the facts. The amount accepted in compromise in such cases should fairly reflect the probability of prevailing on the legal question involved, the probabilities with respect to full or partial recovery of a judgment, paying due regard to the availability of witnesses and other evidentiary support for the Government claim, and related pragmatic considerations. In determining

the litigative risks involved, proportionate weight should be given to the probable amount of court costs and attorney fees pursuant to the Equal Access to Justice Act which may be assessed against the Government if it is unsuccessful in litigation. See 28 U.S.C. 2412.

(e) A claim may be compromised if the cost of collecting the claim does not justify the enforced collection of the full amount. The amount accepted in compromise in such cases may reflect an appropriate discount for the administrative and litigative costs of collection, paying heed to the time which it will take to effect collection. Costs of collecting may be a substantial factor in the settlement of small claims, but normally will not carry great weight in the settlement of large claims. In determining whether the cost of collecting justifies enforced collection of the full amount, it is legitimate to consider the positive effect that enforced collection of some claims may have on the collection of other claims. Since debtors are more likely to pay when first requested to do so if an agency has a policy of vigorous collection of all claims, the fact that the cost of collection of any one claim may exceed the amount of the claim does not necessarily mean that the claim should be compromised. The practical benefits of vigorous collection of a small claim may include a demonstration to other debtors that resistance to payment is not likely to succeed.

(f) *Enforcement policy.* Statutory penalties, forfeitures, or debts established as an aid to enforcement and to compel compliance may be compromised pursuant to this part if the agency's enforcement policy in terms of deterrence and securing compliance, both present and future, will be adequately served by acceptance of the sum to be agreed upon. Mere accidental or technical violations may be dealt with less severely than willful and substantial violations.

(g) Compromises payable in installments are to be discouraged. However, if payment of a compromise by installments is necessary, a legally enforceable agreement for the reinstatement of the prior indebtedness less sums paid thereon and acceleration of the balance

due upon default in the payment of any installment should be obtained, together with security in the manner set forth in §1261.411, in every case in which this is possible.

(h) If the agency's files do not contain reasonably up-to-date credit information as a basis for assessing a compromise proposal, such information may be obtained from the individual debtor by obtaining a statement executed under penalty of perjury showing the debtor's assets and liabilities, income, and expenses. Forms such as Department of Justice Form OBD-500 or OBD-500B may be used for this purpose. Similar data may be obtained from corporate debtors using a form such as Department of Justice Form OBD-500C or by resort to balance sheets and such additional data as seems required. Samples of the Department of Justice forms are available from the Office of the NASA General Counsel. Neither a percentage of a debtor's profits nor stock in a debtor corporation will be accepted in compromise of a claim. In negotiating a compromise with a business concern, consideration should be given to requiring a waiver of the tax-loss-carry-back rights of the debtor.

(i) *Joint and several liability.* When two or more debtors are jointly and severally liable, collection action will not be withheld against one such debtor until the other or others pay their proportionate shares. NASA will not attempt to allocate the burden of paying such claims as between the debtors but will proceed to liquidate the indebtedness as quickly as possible. Care should be taken that a compromise agreement with one such debtor does not release the agency's claim against the remaining debtors. The amount of a compromise with one such debtor shall not be considered a precedent or as morally binding in determining the amount which will be required from other debtors jointly and severally liable on the claim.

§ 1261.415 Execution of releases.

Upon receipt of full payment of a claim, or the amount in compromise of a claim as determined pursuant to §1261.414, the official designated in §1261.402 will prepare and execute, on behalf of the United States, an appro-

priate release, which shall include the provision that it shall be void if procured by fraud, misrepresentation, the presentation of a false claim, or mutual mistake of fact.

§ 1261.416 Suspending or terminating collection action.

(a) The standards set forth in this section apply to the suspension or termination of collection action pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3711(a)(3) on claims which do not exceed \$20,000, exclusive of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, after deducting the amount of partial payments or collections, if any. NASA may suspend or terminate collection action under this part with respect to claims for money or property arising out of activities of the agency, prior to the referral of such claims to the General Accounting Office or to the Department of Justice for litigation. The Comptroller General (or designee) may exercise such authority with respect to claims referred to the General Accounting Office prior to their further referral for litigation.

(b) If, after deducting the amount of partial payments or collections, if any, a claim exceeds \$20,000, exclusive of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, the authority to suspend or terminate rests solely with the Department of Justice. If the designated official believes suspension or termination may be appropriate, the matter should be evaluated using the factors set forth in paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section. If the agency concludes that suspension or termination is appropriate, it must refer the matter, with its reasons for the recommendation, to the Department of Justice, using the Claims Collection Litigation Report. See §1261.417(e) or 4 CFR 105.2(b). If NASA decides not to suspend or terminate collection action on the claim, Department of Justice approval is not required; or if it determines that its claim is plainly erroneous or clearly without legal merit, it may terminate collection action regardless of the amount involved, without the need for Department of Justice concurrence.

(c) *Suspension of collection activity—(1) Inability to locate debtor.* Collection action may be suspended temporarily on

a claim when the debtor cannot be located after diligent effort and there is reason to believe that future collection action may be sufficiently productive to justify periodic review and action on the claim, with due consideration for the size and amount which may be realized thereon. The following sources may be of assistance in locating missing debtors: Telephone directories; city directories; postmasters; drivers' license records; automobile title and registration records; state and local government agencies; the Internal Revenue Service (see 4 CFR 102.18); other Federal agencies; employers, relatives, friends; credit agency skip locate reports, and credit bureaus. Suspension as to a particular debtor should not defer the early liquidation of security for the debt. Every reasonable effort should be made to locate missing debtors sufficiently in advance of the bar of the applicable statute of limitations, such as 28 U.S.C. 2415, to permit the timely filing of suit if such action is warranted. If the missing debtor has signed a confess-judgment note and is in default, referral of the note for the entry of judgment should not be delayed because of the debtor's missing status.

(2) *Financial condition of debtor.* Collection action may also be suspended temporarily on a claim when the debtor owns no substantial equity in realty or personal property and is unable to make payments on the Government's claim or effect a compromise at the time, but the debtor's future prospects justify retention of the claim for periodic review and action, and:

(i) The applicable statute of limitations has been tolled or started running anew; or

(ii) Future collection can be effected by offset, notwithstanding the statute of limitations, with due regard to the 10-year limitation prescribed by 31 U.S.C. 3716(c)(1); or

(iii) The debtor agrees to pay interest on the amount of the debt on which collection action will be temporarily suspended, and such temporary suspension is likely to enhance the debtor's ability to fully pay the principle amount of the debt with interest at a later date.

(3) Request for waiver or administrative review. If the statute under which waiver or administrative review is sought is "mandatory," that is, if it prohibits the agency from collecting the debt prior to the agency's consideration of the request for waiver or review (see *Califano v. Yamasaki*, 422 U.S. 682 (1979)), then collection action must be suspended until either: The agency has considered the request for waiver/review; or the applicable time limit for making the waiver/review request, as prescribed in a written notice, has expired and the debtor, upon notice, has not made such a request. If the applicable waiver/review statute is "permissive," that is, if it does not require all requests for waiver/review to be considered, and if it does not prohibit collection action pending consideration of a waiver/request (for example, 5 U.S.C. 5584), collection action may be suspended pending agency action on a waiver/review request based upon appropriate consideration, on a case-by-case basis, as to whether:

(i) There is a reasonable possibility that waiver will be granted or that the debt (in whole or in part) will be found not owing from the debtor;

(ii) The Government's interests would be protected, if suspension were granted, by reasonable assurance that the debt could be recovered if the debtor does not prevail; and

(iii) Collection of the debt will cause undue hardship.

(4) If the applicable statutes and regulations would not authorize refund by the agency to the debtor of amounts collected prior to agency consideration of the debtor's waiver/review request (in the event the agency acts favorably on it), collection action should ordinarily be suspended, without regard to the factors specified for permissive waivers, unless it appears clear, based on the request and the surrounding circumstances, that the request is frivolous and was made primarily to delay collection. See 4 CFR 104.2.

(d) *Termination of collection activity.* Collection activity may be terminated and NASA may close its file on the claim based on the following:

(1) Inability to collect any substantial amount. Collection action may be terminated on a claim when it becomes

clear that the Government cannot collect or enforce collection of any significant sum from the debtor, having due regard for the judicial remedies available to the Government, the debtor's future financial prospects, and the exemptions available to the debtor under State and Federal law. In determining the debtor's inability to pay, the following factors, among others, may be considered: Age and health of the debtor; present and potential income; inheritance prospects; the possibility that assets have been concealed or improperly transferred by the debtor; the availability of assets or income which may be realized by enforced collection proceedings.

(2) *Inability to locate debtor.* Collection action may be terminated on a claim when the debtor cannot be located, and either:

(i) There is no security remaining to be liquidated; or

(ii) The applicable statute of limitations has run and the prospects of collecting by offset, notwithstanding the bar of the statute of limitations, are too remote to justify retention of the claim.

(3) *Cost will exceed recovery.* Collection action may be terminated on a claim when it is likely that the cost of further collection action will exceed the amount recoverable thereby.

(4) *Claim legally without merit.* Collection action should be terminated immediately on a claim whenever it is determined that the claim is legally without merit.

(5) *Claim cannot be substantiated by evidence.* Collection action should be terminated when it is determined that the evidence necessary to prove the claim cannot be produced or the necessary witnesses are unavailable and efforts to reduce voluntary payment are unavailing.

(e) *Transfer of claim.* When NASA has doubt as to whether collection action should be suspended or terminated on a claim, it may refer the claim to the General Accounting Office for advice. When a significant enforcement policy is involved in reducing a statutory penalty or forfeiture to judgment, or recovery of a judgment is a prerequisite to the imposition of administrative sanctions, such as the suspension or

revocation of a license or the privilege of participating in a Government sponsored program, NASA may refer such a claim for litigation even though termination of collection activity might otherwise be given consideration under paragraphs (d)(1) and (2) of this section. Claims on which NASA holds a judgment by assignment or otherwise will be referred to the Department of Justice for further action if renewal of the judgment lien or enforced collection proceedings are justified under the criteria discussed in this section.

§ 1261.417 Referral to Department of Justice (DJ) or General Accounting Office (GAO).

(a) *Prompt referral.* Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section, claims on which aggressive collection action has been taken in accordance with § 1261.406 and which cannot be compromised, or on which collection action cannot be suspended or terminated, in accordance with §§ 1261.414 and 1261.416, shall be promptly referred to the Department of Justice for litigation.

(1) Claims for which the gross original amount is over \$200,000 shall be referred to the Commercial Litigation Branch, Civil Division, Department of Justice, Washington, DC 20530.

(2) Claims for which the gross original amount is \$200,000 or less shall be referred to the United States Attorney in whose judicial district the debtor can be found. Referrals should be made as early as possible, consistent with aggressive agency collection action and the observance of the regulations contained in this subpart, and in any event, well within the period for bringing a timely suit against the debtor. Ordinarily, referrals should be made within 1 year of the agency's final determination of the fact and the amount of the debt.

(3) *Minimum amount.* NASA is not to refer claims of less than \$600, exclusive of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, for litigation unless:

(i) Referral is important to a significant enforcement policy; or

(ii) The debtor not only has the clear ability to pay the claim but the Government can effectively enforce payment, having due regard for the exemptions available to the debtor under State and Federal law and the judicial remedies available to the Government.

(b) Claims arising from audit exceptions taken by the GAO to payments made by agencies must be referred to the GAO for review and approval prior to referral to the Department of Justice for litigation, unless NASA has been granted an exception by the GAO. Referrals shall comply with instructions, including monetary limitations, contained in the GAO Policy and Procedures Manual for Guidance to Federal Agencies and paragraphs (e) and (f) of this section.

(c) When the merits of the claim, the amount owed on the claim, or the propriety of acceptance of a proposed compromise, suspension, or termination are in doubt, the designated official should refer the matter to the General Accounting Office for resolution and instructions prior to proceeding with collection action and/or referral to the Department of Justice for litigation.

(d) Once a claim has been referred to GAO or to the Department of Justice pursuant to this section, NASA shall refrain from having any contact with the debtor about the pending claim and shall direct the debtor to GAO or to the DJ, as appropriate, when questions concerning the claim are raised by the debtor. GAO or the DJ, as appropriate, shall be immediately notified by NASA of any payments which are received from the debtor subsequent to referral of a claim under this section.

(e) *Claims Collection Litigation Report (CCLR)*. Unless an exception has been granted by the Department of Justice in consultation with the General Accounting Office, the Claims Collection Litigation Report (CCLR), which was officially implemented by NASA, effective March 1, 1983, shall be used with all referrals of administratively uncollectible claims. As required by the CCLR, the following information must be included:

(1) *Report of prior collection actions*. A checklist or brief summary of the actions previously taken to collect or compromise the claim. If any of the ad-

ministrative collection actions have been omitted, the reason for their omission must be provided. GAO, the United States Attorney, or the Civil Division of the Department of Justice may return claims at their option when there is insufficient justification for the omission of one or more of the administrative collection actions enumerated in this subpart (see 4 CFR part 102).

(2) *Current address of debtor*. The current address of the debtor, or the name and address of the agent for a corporation upon whom service may be made. Reasonable and appropriate steps will be taken to locate missing parties in all cases. Referrals to the Department of Justice for the commencement of foreclosure of other proceedings, in which the current address of any party is unknown, will be accompanied by a listing of the prior known addresses of such party and a statement of the steps taken to locate that party.

(3) *Credit data*. Reasonably current credit data which indicates that there is a reasonable prospect of effecting enforced collection from the debtor, having due regard for the exemptions available to the debtor under State and Federal law and the judicial remedies available to the Government. Such credit data may take the form of:

- (i) A commercial credit report;
- (ii) An agency investigative report showing the debtor's assets, liabilities, income, and expenses;
- (iii) The individual debtor's own financial statement executed under penalty of perjury reflecting the debtor's assets, liabilities, income, and expenses; or
- (iv) An audited balance sheet of a corporate debtor.

(4) *Reasons for credit data omissions*. The credit data may be omitted if:

- (i) A surety bond is available in an amount sufficient to satisfy the claim in full;
- (ii) The forced sale value of the security available for application to the Government's claim is sufficient to satisfy the claim in full;
- (iii) NASA wishes to liquidate loan collateral through judicial foreclosure but does not desire a deficiency judgment;

(iv) The debtor is in bankruptcy or receivership;

(v) The debtor's liability to the Government is fully covered by insurance, in which case NASA will furnish such information as it can develop concerning the identity and address of the insurer and the type and amount of insurance coverage; or

(vi) The status of the debtor is such that credit data is not normally available or cannot reasonably be obtained, for example, a unit of State or local government.

(f) *Preservation of evidence.* Care will be taken to preserve all files, records, and exhibits on claims referred or to be referred to the Department of Justice for litigation. Under no circumstances should original documents be sent to the Department of Justice or the United States Attorney without specific prior approval to do so. Copies of relevant documents should be sent whenever necessary.

Subpart 1261.5—Administrative Offset of Claims

SOURCE: 52 FR 19487, May 26, 1987, unless otherwise noted.

§ 1261.500 Scope of subpart.

(a) This subpart applies to collection of claims by administrative offset under section 5 of the Federal Claims Collection Act of 1966 as amended by the Debt Collection Act of 1982 (31 U.S.C. 3716), other statutory authority, or the common law; it does not include "Salary Offset," which is governed by subpart 1261.6, *infra*. Consistent with 4 CFR 102.3, collection by administrative offset will be undertaken by NASA on all liquidated or certain in amount claims in every instance in which such collection is determined to be feasible and not otherwise prohibited.

(b) Whether collection by administrative offset is feasible is a determination to be made by NASA on a case-by-case basis, in the exercise of sound discretion. NASA will consider not only whether administrative offset can be accomplished, both practically and legally, but also whether offset is best suited to further and protect all of the Government's interests. In appropriate circumstances, NASA may give due

consideration to the debtor's financial condition; or whether offset would tend to substantially interfere with or defeat the purposes of the program authorizing the payments against which offset is contemplated. For example, under a grant program in which payments are made in advance of the grantee's performance, offset will normally be inappropriate.

(c) NASA is not authorized by 31 U.S.C. 3716 to use administrative offset with respect to:

(1) Debts owed by any State or local Government;

(2) Debts arising under or payments made under the Social Security Act, the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, or the tariff laws of the United States; or

(3) Any case in which collection of the type of debt involved by administrative offset is explicitly provided for or prohibited by another statute. However, unless otherwise provided by contract or law, debts or payments which are not subject to administrative offset under 31 U.S.C. 3716 may be collected by administrative offset under the common law or other applicable statutory authority.

§ 1261.501 Definition.

Administrative offset—the term, as defined in 31 U.S.C. 3701(a)(1), means "withholding money payable by the United States Government to, or held by the Government for, a person to satisfy a debt the person owes the Government."

§ 1261.502 Notification procedures.

(a) Before collecting any claims through administrative offset, a 30-day written notice must be sent to the debtor by certified mail, return receipt requested. The notice must include:

(1) The nature and amount of the debt;

(2) NASA's intention to collect by administrative offset; and

(3) An explanation of the debtor's rights under 31 U.S.C. 3716(a), or other relied upon statutory authority, which must include a statement that the debtor has the opportunity, within the 30-day notice period, to:

(i) Inspect and copy records of NASA with respect to the debt;

(ii) Request a review by NASA of its decision related to the claim; and

(iii) Enter into a written agreement with the designated official (see § 1261.402) to repay the amount of the claim. However, sound judgment should be exercised in determining whether to accept a repayment agreement in lieu of offset. The determination should balance the Government's interest in collecting the debt against fairness to the debtor. If the debt is delinquent and the debtor has not disputed its existence or amount, NASA should accept a repayment agreement in lieu of offset only if the debtor is able to establish that offset would result in undue financial hardship or would be against equity and good conscience.

(b) NASA may effect administrative offset against a payment to be made to a debtor prior to the completion of the procedures required by paragraph (a) of this section if:

(1) Failure to take the offset would substantially prejudice the Government's ability to collect the debt; and

(2) The time before the payment is to be made does not reasonably permit the completion of those procedures. Such prior offset must be promptly followed by the completion of those procedures. Amounts recovered by offset but later found not to be owed to the Government shall be promptly refunded.

(3) In cases where the procedural requirements of paragraph (a) of this section had previously been provided to the debtor in connection with the same debt under some other statutory or regulatory authority, such as pursuant to a notice of audit disallowance or salary offset under § 1261.603, the agency is not required to duplicate those requirements before taking administrative offset.

§ 1261.503 Agency records inspection; hearing or review.

(a) NASA shall provide the debtor with a reasonable opportunity for an "oral hearing" when:

(1) An applicable statute authorizes or requires the agency to consider waiver of the indebtedness involved, the debtor requests waiver of the indebtedness, and the waiver determina-

tion turns on an issue of credibility or veracity; or

(2) The debtor requests reconsideration of the debt and the agency determines that the question of the indebtedness cannot be resolved by review of the documentary evidence, for example, when the validity of the debt turns on an issue of credibility or veracity. Unless otherwise required by law, an oral hearing under this section is not required to be a formal evidentiary-type hearing, although significant matters discussed at the hearing should be carefully documented. See 4 CFR 102.3(c)(1). Such hearing may be an informal discussion/interview with the debtor, face-to-face meeting between debtor and cognizant NASA personnel, or written formal submission by the debtor and response by the NASA cognizant personnel with an opportunity for oral presentation. The hearing will be conducted before or in the presence of an official designated by the NASA General Counsel or designee on a case-by-case basis. The decision of the reviewing/hearing official should be communicated in writing (no particular form is required) to the affected parties, and will constitute the final administrative decision of the agency.

(b) Paragraph (a) of this section does not require an oral hearing with respect to debt collection systems in which determinations of indebtedness or waiver rarely involve issues of credibility or veracity and NASA has determined that review of the written record is ordinarily an adequate means to correct prior mistakes. In administering such a system, the agency is not required to sift through all of the requests received in order to accord oral hearings in those few cases which may involve issues of credibility or veracity. See 4 CFR 102.3(c)(2).

(c) In those cases where an oral hearing is not required or granted, NASA will nevertheless accord the debtor a "paper hearing"—that is, the agency will make its determination on the request for waiver or reconsideration based upon a review of the available written record. See 4 CFR 102.3(c)(3). In such case, the responsible official or designee shall refer the request to the

appropriate NASA legal counsel for review and determination by counsel or designee.

(d) A request to inspect and/or copy the debtor's own debt records or related files, and/or for a hearing or review accompanied by a statement of the basis or grounds for such hearing or review, must be submitted within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the written notice under § 1261.502(a). A reasonable time to inspect and copy records will be provided during official working hours, but not to exceed 5 business days, unless a verified statement showing good cause requires a longer period. Any suspension of collection or other charges during the period of the inspection, or hearing or review, shall comply with §§ 1261.412 and 1261.416. Requests for or consideration of compromising the debt must comply with § 1261.414.

§ 1261.504 Interagency requests.

(a) Requests to NASA by other Federal agencies for administrative offset should be in writing and forwarded to the Office of the NASA Comptroller, NASA Headquarters, Washington, DC 20546.

(b) Requests by NASA to other Federal agencies holding funds payable to the debtor should be in writing and forwarded, certified return receipt, as specified by that agency in its regulations; however, if such rule is not readily available or identifiable, the request should be submitted to that agency's office of legal counsel with a request that it be processed in accordance with their internal procedures.

(c) Requests to and from NASA should be processed within 30 calendar days of receipt. If such processing is impractical or not feasible, notice to extend the time period for another 30 calendar days should be forwarded 10 calendar days prior to the expiration of the first 30-day period.

(d) Requests from or to NASA must be accompanied by a certification that the debtor owes the debt (including the amount) and that the provisions of (or comparable to) subpart 1261.5 or subpart 1261.6, as applicable, have been fully complied with. NASA will cooperate with other agencies in effecting collection.

§ 1261.505 Multiple debts.

When collecting multiple debts by administrative offset, NASA will apply the recovered amounts to those debts in accordance with the best interests of the United States, as determined by the facts and circumstances of the particular case, paying special attention to applicable statutes of limitations.

§ 1261.506 Limitation periods.

NASA may not initiate administrative offset to collect a debt under 31 U.S.C. 3716 more than 10 years after the Government's right to collect the debt first accrued, unless facts material to the Government's right to collect the debt were not known and could not reasonably have been known by the official or officials of the Government who were charged with the responsibility to discover and collect such debts. Determination of when the debt first accrued is to be made in accordance with existing law regarding the accrual of debts, such as under 28 U.S.C. 2415. See 4 CFR 102.3(b)(3).

§ 1261.507 Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund.

(a) Unless otherwise prohibited by law, NASA may request that moneys which are due and payable to a debtor from the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund be administratively offset in reasonable amounts in order to collect in one full payment or a minimal number of payments debts owed to the United States by the debtor. Such requests shall be made to the appropriate officials of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in accordance with the OPM regulations (see 5 CFR 831.1801, *et seq.*).

(b) When making a request for administrative offset under paragraph (a) of this section, NASA shall include a written certification that:

(1) The debtor owes the United States a debt, including the amount of the debt;

(2) NASA has complied with the applicable statutes, regulations, and procedures of the Office of Personnel Management; and

(3) NASA has complied with the requirements of this subpart 1261.5 which implements 4 CFR 102.3, including any required hearing or review.

(c) Once NASA has decided to request administrative offset under this section, the request should be made as soon as practical after completion of the applicable procedures in order that the Office of Personnel Management may identify and “flag” the debtor’s account in anticipation of the time when the debtor requests or becomes eligible to receive payments from the Fund. This will satisfy any requirement that offset be initiated prior to expiration of the applicable statute of limitations. At such time as the debtor makes a claim for payments from the Fund, if at least a year has elapsed since the offset request was originally made, the debtor should be permitted to offer a satisfactory repayment plan in lieu of offset upon establishing that changed financial circumstances would render the offset unjust.

(d) If NASA collects part or all of the debt by other means before deductions are made or completed pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section, the designated official should act promptly to modify or terminate the agency’s request to OPM for offset.

(e) OPM is not required or authorized by 4 CFR 102.4 to review the merits of NASA’s determination with respect to:

- (1) The amount and validity of the debt;
- (2) Waiver under an applicable statute; or
- (3) Provide or not provide an oral hearing.

§ 1261.508 Offset against a judgment.

Collection by offset against a judgment obtained by a debtor against the United States shall be accomplished in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3728.

Subpart 1261.6—Collection by Offset From Indebted Government Employees

SOURCE: 52 FR 19487, May 26, 1987, unless otherwise noted.

§ 1261.600 Purpose of subpart.

This subpart implements 5 U.S.C. 5514 in accordance with the OPM regulation and establishes the procedural requirements for recovering pre-judgment debts from the current pay ac-

count of an employee through what is commonly called salary offset, including a situation where NASA (the current paying agency) is not the employee’s creditor agency. Salary offset to satisfy a judgment or a court determined debt is governed by section 124 of Pub. L. 97–276 (October 2, 1982), 5 U.S.C. 5514 *note*.

§ 1261.601 Scope of subpart.

(a) *Coverage.* This subpart applies to agencies and employees as defined in § 1261.602.

(b) *Applicability.* This subpart and 5 U.S.C. 5514 apply in recovering certain prejudgment debts by administrative offset except where the employee consents to the recovery, from the current pay account of an employee. Because it is an administrative offset, debt collection procedures for salary offset which are not specified in 5 U.S.C. 5514 and this subpart should be consistent with subpart 1261.5.

(1) *Excluded debts or claims.* The procedures contained in this subpart do not apply to debts or claims arising under the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as amended (26 U.S.C. 1 *et seq.*), the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 301 *et seq.*), or the tariff laws of the United States; or to any case where collection of a debt by salary offset is explicitly provided for or prohibited by another statute (e.g., travel advances in 5 U.S.C. 5705, employee training expenses in 5 U.S.C. 4108, and debts determined by a court as provided in 5 U.S.C. 5514 *note*).

(2) *Waiver requests and claims to the General Accounting Office.* This subpart does not preclude an employee from requesting waiver of a salary overpayment under 5 U.S.C. 5584, 10 U.S.C. 2774, or 32 U.S.C. 716, or in any way questioning the amount or validity of a debt by submitting a subsequent claim to the General Accounting Office in accordance with procedures prescribed by the General Accounting Office. Similarly, in the case of other types of debts, it does not preclude an employee from requesting waiver, if waiver is available under any statutory provision pertaining to the particular debt being collected.

§ 1261.602 Definitions.

For purposes of this subpart:

(a) *Agency* means:

(1) An Executive agency as defined in section 105 of title 5, United States Code, including U.S. Postal Service and the U.S. Postal Rate Commission;

(2) A military department as defined in section 102 of Title 5, United States Code;

(3) An agency or court in the judicial branch, including a court as defined in section 610 of Title 28, United States Code, the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation;

(4) An agency of the legislative branch, including the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives; and

(5) Other independent establishments that are entities of the Federal Government.

(b) *Creditor agency* means the agency to which the debt is owed.

(c) *Debt* means an amount owed to the United States from sources which include loans insured or guaranteed by the United States and all other amounts due the United States from fees, leases, rents, royalties, services, sales of real or personal property, overpayments, penalties, damages, interest, fines and forfeitures (except those arising under the Uniform Code of Military Justice), and all other similar sources.

(d) *Disposable pay* means that part of current basic pay, special pay, incentive pay, retired pay, retainer pay, or in the case of an employee not entitled to basic pay, other authorized pay remaining after the deduction of any amount required by law to be withheld. NASA must exclude deductions listed in OPM's garnishment regulations at 5 CFR 581.105 (b) through (f) to determine disposable pay subject to salary offset.

(e) *Employee* means a current employee of an agency, including a current member of the Armed Forces or a Reserve of the Armed Forces (Reserves).

(f) *Paying agency* means the agency employing the individual and authorizing the payment of his or her current pay.

(g) *Salary offset* means an administrative offset to collect a debt under 5 U.S.C. 5514 by deduction(s) at one or more officially established pay intervals from the current pay account of

an employee without his or her consent.

(h) *Waiver* means the cancellation, remission, forgiveness, or nonrecovery of a debt allegedly owed by an employee to an agency as permitted or required by 5 U.S.C. 8346(b), or any other law.

§ 1261.603 Procedures for salary offset.

If NASA is both the paying and creditor agency, the following requirements must be met before a deduction is made from the current pay account of an employee.

(a) *Written notice.* The employee must be sent a minimum of 30 days written notice, which specifies:

(1) The origin, nature and amount of the indebtedness, and the official to contact within the agency (ordinarily, the designated financial management official for the particular installation);

(2) The intention of the agency to initiate collection of the debt through salary offset by deductions from the employee's current disposable pay, stating the amount, frequency, proposed beginning date, and duration of intended deductions (the amount to be deducted for any period, without the consent of the employee, may not exceed 15 percent of disposable pay);

(3) An explanation of any interest, penalties, or administrative costs included in the amount, and that such assessment must be made unless excused in accordance with 14 CFR 1261.412;

(4) The right for an opportunity (which does not toll the running of the 30-day period) to inspect and copy NASA records relating to the debt or to request and receive (if reasonable) a copy of such records, provided that such opportunity must be exercised on or before the 15th day following receipt of the notice and can be conducted only during official working hours for a reasonable period of time not to exceed 5 working days;

(5) If not previously provided, the opportunity (under terms agreeable to NASA) to establish a schedule for the voluntary repayment of the debt or to enter into a written agreement to establish a schedule for repayment of the debt in lieu of offset. The agreement must be in writing, signed by both the

employee and the authorized agency official (see 14 CFR 1261.402) and documented in NASA's files (see 14 CFR 1261.407(d));

(6) An opportunity for a hearing, as provided in paragraph (c) of this section, on the agency's determination concerning the existence and amount of the debt, and the terms of the repayment schedule (in the case of an employee whose repayment schedule is established other than by written agreement);

(7) The hearing request should be addressed to the Office of the NASA General Counsel or to the Office of Chief Counsel of the NASA installation involved, as appropriate; counsel's name and address will be as stated in the notice.

(8) Any other rights and remedies available to the employee under statutes or regulations governing the program for which the collection is being made; and

(9) Unless there are applicable contractual or statutory provisions to the contrary, that amounts paid on or deducted for the debt which are later waived or found not owed to the United States will be promptly refunded to the employee.

(b) *Exception to entitlement to written notice.* NASA is not required to comply with paragraph (a) of this section for any adjustment to pay arising out of an employee's election of coverage or a change in coverage under a Federal benefits program requiring periodic deductions from pay, if the amount to be recovered was accumulated over four pay periods or less.

(c) *Petition filing; hearing; decision and review.* The notice described in paragraph (a) of this section should include the following provisions, which may be copied and attached to the notice.

(1) The employee may petition for a hearing, but such petition must be in writing and received by NASA on or before the 15th day following receipt of the notice, and include a statement of the reasons for such hearing. No particular form is required, and a timely, legible letter request (with the stated reasons) will suffice; however, the employee must sign the petition and include with it, with reasonable specificity, all the supporting facts and evi-

dence, including a list of the witnesses, if any.

(2) The petition should be addressed to the agency counsel designated in the notice, but the hearing will be conducted by an official not under the supervision or control of the NASA Administrator or by appointment of an administrative law judge. Notice of the name and address of the hearing official will be sent to the employee within 10 days of receipt of petition. A hearing official will be designated on a case-by-case basis under reimbursable arrangements or through direct payment as events may warrant.

(3) The timely filing of the petition will stay the commencement of collection; and the final decision on the hearing will be issued at the earliest practicable date, but not later than 60 days after the filing of the petition requesting the hearing unless the employee requests and the hearing official grants a delay in the proceedings.

(4) Any knowingly false or frivolous statements, representations, or evidence may subject the employee to:

(i) Disciplinary procedures appropriate under Chapter 75 of Title 5, United States Code, 5 CFR part 752, or any other applicable statutes or regulations;

(ii) Penalties under the False Claims Act, sections 3729 through 3731 of Title 31, United States Code, or any other applicable statutory authority; or

(iii) Criminal penalties under sections 286, 287, 1001, and 1002 of Title 18, United States Code, or any other applicable statutory authority.

(5) The form and content of the hearing will be determined by the hearing official depending on the nature and complexity of the transaction giving rise to the debt. The hearing is not an adversarial adjudication, and need not take the form of an evidentiary hearing. However, depending on the particular facts and circumstances, the hearing may be analogous to a fact-finding proceeding with oral presentations; or an informal meeting with or interview of the employee; or formal written submissions, with an opportunity for oral presentation, and decision based on the available written record. Ordinarily, hearings may consist of informal conferences before the

hearing official in which the employee and agency officials will be given full opportunity to present evidence, witnesses, and argument. The employee may represent himself or herself or be represented by an individual of his or her choice. The hearing official must maintain a summary record of the hearing provided under this subpart. For additional guidance, see 14 CFR 1261.503.

(6) The decision will be in writing and state:

(i) The facts purported to evidence the nature and origin of the alleged debt;

(ii) The respective positions of the agency and of the employee;

(iii) The hearing official's analysis (which address the employee's/agency's grounds, the amount and validity of the alleged debt, and, where applicable, the repayment schedule); and

(iv) The hearing official's findings and conclusions.

(7) The hearing official will notify the employee, the NASA Comptroller or designee, and the designated agency counsel of the decision.

(8) The decision of the hearing official shall constitute the Final Administrative Decision of the agency.

(d) *Petition after time expiration.* No petition for a hearing is to be granted if made after the 15-day period prescribed in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, unless the employee can show to the satisfaction of the agency official indicated on the notice that the delay was caused by circumstances beyond his or her control (for example, proven incapacity, illness, or hospitalization), or that the agency did not give notice of the time limit and the employee was otherwise unaware of such limit.

(e) *Limitation on amount and duration of deductions.* Ordinarily, debts must be collected in one lump-sum payment. However, if the employee is financially unable to pay in one lump sum or if the amount of the debt exceeds 15 percent of disposable pay for an officially established pay interval, collection must be made in installments. The size of installment deductions must bear a reasonable relationship to the size of the debt and the employee's ability to pay (see 14 CFR 1261.411), but the amount deducted for any period must not ex-

ceed 15 percent of the disposable pay from which the deduction is made (unless the employee has agreed in writing to the deduction of a greater amount). Deduction must commence with the next full pay interval (ordinarily, the next biweekly pay period). Such installment deductions must be made over a period not greater than the anticipated period of active duty or employment, as the case may be, except as provided in paragraph (f) of this section.

(f) *Determining ability to pay.* An offset may produce an extreme financial hardship for an employee if it prevents the employee from meeting costs necessarily incurred for essential subsistence expenses for food, reasonable housing, clothing, transportation, and medical care. In determining whether an offset would prevent the employee from meeting the essential subsistence expenses, the employee may be required to show income from all sources (including spouse and dependents, if applicable), list all known assets, explain exceptional expenses, and produce any other relevant factors.

(g) *Liquidation from final check; other recovery.* If the employee retires or resigns from Federal service, or if his or her employment or period of active duty ends before collection of the debt is completed, the balance may be deducted from the final salary payment and any remaining balance from the lump-sum leave, if applicable. If the debt is not fully paid by offset from any final payment due the former employee as of the date of separation, offset may be made from later payments of any kind due the former employee from the United States (as provided in 14 CFR part 1261 subpart 1261.5, including offset from the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund under 14 CFR 1261.507).

(h) *Interest, penalties, and administrative costs.* Assessment of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, on debts being collected under this subpart, shall be in accordance with 14 CFR 1261.412 which implements 4 CFR 102.13.

§ 1261.604 Nonwaiver of rights by involuntary setoff.

The employee's involuntary payment of all or any portion of the debt, being collected under this subpart, must not be construed as a waiver of any rights which the employee may have under an existing written contract applicable to the specific debt or under any other pertinent statutory authority for the collection of claims of the United States or the agency.

§ 1261.605 Refunds.

(a) NASA will promptly refund to the employee amounts paid or deducted under this subpart when:

(1) A debt is waived or otherwise found not owing the United States (unless expressly prohibited by statute or regulation); or

(2) The employee's paying agency is directed by an administrative or judicial order to refund amounts deducted from his or her current pay.

(b) Refunds are not to bear any interest unless the law applicable to that particular debt specifically requires or permits a stated interest amount on refunds.

§ 1261.606 Salary offset request by a creditor agency other than NASA (the current paying agency).

(a) *Format of the request.* Upon completion of the procedures established by the creditor agency under 5 U.S.C. 5514, the creditor agency must:

(1) Certify, in writing, that the employee owes the debt, the amount and basis of the debt, the date on which payment(s) is/are due, the date the Government's right to collect the debt first accrued, and that the creditor agency's regulations implementing 5 U.S.C. 5514 have been approved by OPM;

(2) If the collection must be made in installments, the creditor agency must also advise NASA of the number of installments to be collected, the amount of each installment, and the commencing date of the first installment, if a date other than the next officially established pay period is required; and

(3) Unless the employee has consented to the salary offset in writing or signed a statement acknowledging receipt of the required procedures and

the writing or statement is attached to the debt claim request, the creditor agency must also indicate the action(s) taken under 5 U.S.C. 5514(a)(2) and give the date(s) the action(s) was/were taken.

(b) *Limitation period.* The creditor agency may not initiate offset to collect a debt more than 10 years after the Government's right to collect the debt first accrued, except as provided in 14 CFR 1261.506, which implements 4 CFR 102.3(b)(3).

(c) *Employees who are separating or have separated—*(1) *Employees who are in the process of separating.* If the employee is in the process of separating, the creditor agency must submit its debt claim to the employee's paying agency for collection as provided in 5 CFR 550.1104(1) of the OPM regulations (14 CFR 1261.603(f)) for "liquidation from final check." NASA must then certify the total amount of its collection and notify the creditor agency and the employee as provided in paragraph (c)(3) of this section. If NASA is aware that the employee is entitled to payments from the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund, or other similar payments, it should notify the creditor agency and forward the copy of the debt claim and certification to the agency responsible for making such payments as notice that a debt is outstanding. However, the creditor agency, not NASA, must submit a properly certified claim to the agency responsible for making such payments before collection can be made.

(2) *Employees who have already separated.* If the employee is already separated and all payments due from NASA have been paid, NASA must return the claim to the creditor agency for any further collection, indicating the employee's date of separation and the current employment and mailing address(es), if known.

(3) *Employee who transfers from NASA to another Federal agency.*

(i) *Certification of amount collected.* If, after the creditor agency has submitted the debt claim to NASA, the employee transfers to another Federal agency before the debt is collected in full, NASA must then certify the total amount of the collection made on the debt. A copy of the certification should

be furnished the employee, and another copy furnished to the creditor agency along with notice of the employee's transfer.

(ii) *Official personnel folder insertion; new paying agency.* Information on the debt claim must be inserted in the employee's official personnel folder along with a copy of the certification of the amount which has been collected. Upon receiving the official personnel folder, the new paying agency must resume the collection from the employee's current pay account and notify the employee and the creditor agency of the resumption. It will not be necessary for the creditor agency to repeat the due process procedures described by 5 U.S.C. 5514 of this subpart in order to resume the collection. However, it will be the responsibility of the creditor agency to review the debt upon receiving NASA's notice of the employee's transfer to make sure the collection is resumed by the new paying agency.

(d) *Processing the debt claim upon receipt*—(1) *Incomplete claim.* If NASA receives incomplete debt claim information, it must return the request with a notice that procedures under 5 U.S.C. 5514 and this subpart must be provided and complete debt claim information received before action will be taken to collect from the employee's current pay account.

(2) *Complete claim.* If NASA receives a properly documented debt claim, deductions should be scheduled to begin prospectively at the next officially established pay interval. A copy of the debt claim request must be given to the debtor, along with notice of the date deductions will commence if different from that stated on the debt claim request.

(3) NASA is not required or authorized to review the merits of the creditor agency's determination with respect to the amount or validity of the debt as stated in the debt claim request.

§ 1261.607 Obtaining the services of a hearing official.

(a) When the debtor does not work for the creditor agency and the creditor agency cannot provide a prompt and appropriate hearing before an administrative law judge or before a

hearing official furnished pursuant to another lawful arrangement, the creditor agency may contact an agent of the paying agency designated in appendix A of 5 CFR part 581 to arrange for a hearing official, and the paying agency must then cooperate as provided by 4 CFR 102.1 and provide a hearing official.

(b) When the debtor works for the creditor agency, the creditor agency may contact any agent (of another agency) designated in appendix A of 5 CFR part 581 to arrange for a hearing official. Agencies must then cooperate as required by 4 CFR 102.1 and provide a hearing official.

PART 1262—EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACT IN AGENCY PROCEEDINGS

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AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 504; 42 U.S.C. 2473(c)(1).

SOURCE: 51 FR 15311, Apr. 23, 1986, unless otherwise noted.